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FM USMISSION USNATO  
TO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 1261  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3471  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0690  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0676  
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY 0471  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1000  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0093  
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHMFIISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/USNMR SHAPE BE PRIORITY  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 USNATO 000444

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

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TAGS: MOPS MCAP MARR PREL NATO PINS PTER AF  
SUBJECT: AFGHAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE: I SUPPORT MCCHRYS TAL'S WAY AHEAD

REF: SG(2009)0846

USNATO 00000444 001.2 OF 003

¶1. (SBU) On October 6, NATO Secretary General Fogh Rasmussen distributed to Allies a letter he received from Afghan Minister of Defense General Wardak (ref). In the letter, Wardak expressed his "wholehearted support for the findings of General McChrystal's assessment of the situation in Afghanistan and his recommended way ahead." He went on to argue that the new strategy should be "fully resourced." Describing the situation in Afghanistan as being at a "critical juncture," Wardak warned that failure in Afghanistan could result in the country becoming a terrorist base or a failed state, as well as a source for regional and global instability." He stressed, however, that he believed that the war was still "winnable."

¶2. (SBU) Wardak also praised McChrystal for taking a new approach in his dealings with the Afghan government, commenting that "We Afghans now really think we are a part of the same team."

¶3. (SBU) The full text of Wardak's letter follows:

BEGIN TEXT:

1 October 2009

The Honorable Anders Fogh Rasmussen  
Secretary-General  
North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Dear Secretary-General,

My purpose in writing is to express wholehearted support for the findings of General McChrystal's assessment of the situation in Afghanistan and his recommended way ahead. I base my support not only as the Minister of Defense, but as a professional soldier with over 31 years experience as both an insurgent and counter-insurgent leader. As his assessment

makes clear, we are at a critical point in our endeavor. We have arrived here by virtue of decisions made in the past that underestimated the enemy, failed to identify the true source of the threat, did not create a fully resourced civil-military counterinsurgency campaign plan, that failed to deliver good governance and development for the people, and that under-resourced the campaign. However, victory is still within our grasp, provided that we recommit ourselves based on lessons learned. As GEN McChrystal states in his assessment success is achievable but additional resources and significant changes in strategy are required.

The stakes are high in Afghanistan. Failure could result in the country becoming a terrorist base or a failed state, as well as a source of regional and global instability. Therefore, as General McChrystal also emphasized, our efforts require a firm political will and substantial patience on the part of the Afghan people, the Afghan government, and the countries providing support. Any wavering of our resolve or suggestion of an exit strategy or deadline for withdrawal would be, as Secretary Gates said, a "strategic mistake" and have catastrophic consequences for us all.

Counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency are inextricably linked. Counter-terrorism alone leads to an open ended campaign, one that never ends. It will not lead to strategic victory. In fact, many argue that the campaign we have conducted these last eight years was heavily-tilted toward counter-terrorism rather than a full civil-military counter-insurgency effort. Adopting a counter-terrorism strategy would be dealing with the symptoms rather than the disease. Defeating such enemies requires a global strategic response and continued strong leadership by all parties

USNATO 00000444 002.2 OF 003

involved. The response must also address the array of linked sources and conflicts that sustain their movement, while addressing local grievances. The key to success is winning the struggle for the support of the people by protecting them from the enemy and increasing their welfare through good governance and economic development. We must regain the initiative from the enemy, and gain the people's trust that we are committed to seeing the mission through to its end. To quote Sir Winston Churchill, "Success is not final and failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts." Patience, a long war strategy, and the allocation of sufficient resources can make all the difference. The Taliban lacks strong leadership, popular support, and an ideology that Afghans can embrace. Yet the threat is growing due to its external support and the weakness of our joint efforts. Proper application of General McChrystal's strategy will counter this threat, and ensure our joint victory.

We must ensure that security operations are integrated with civilian - and principally Afghan-led - efforts to improve governance and development. The government's support and legitimacy will increase only if we can assure the security of the people and provide them with the basic necessities of life. Therefore the new strategy should be fully resourced. By doing so we will shorten the duration of the campaign.

I firmly believe that General McChrystal's assessment has all of the elements that we have longed for since 2002, including: accelerating the growth and fielding of the ANA and ANP; further growth of the ANSF to 400,000 personnel; more effective partnering arrangements between ISAF and ANSF; increasing economic aid and making Afghan ministries the vehicle for delivering development assistance; renewing reconciliation efforts; continuing progress with respect to civilian casualties, collateral damage, house searches and detention; intensifying international efforts to deprive the enemy of its external support; and overhauling the counter-narcotics efforts. To implement these elements, NATO can play a decisive and significant role for which Your Excellency's support is requested.

Success for Afghans is to be able to defend Afghan territory on our own, with the US and NATO playing strong supporting roles as part of an enduring strategic partnership with our country. An Afghan solution is far more cost-effective, politically less complex, and will save the lives of our friends and allies. We therefore will accelerate the growth of the Afghan National Security Forces. But as General McChrystal acknowledged in his assessment, until the ANSF has sufficient capability coalition forces must "bridge the gap" to prevent any deterioration in the situation and to ensure HOLD can be achieved in order to allow BUILD.

The approach General McChrystal as the NATO ISAF Commander has already taken is unprecedented. We Afghans now really think we are part of the same team. There is more integration in our planning processes, more sharing of intelligence and enhanced operational cohesiveness. And the way he has described partnership will further improve our effectiveness and prepare us for the day we can fully take over the responsibility for our security.

We are at a critical juncture in our history. For Afghans it is a question of our national survival. We will therefore recommit ourselves and spare no effort or sacrifice to achieve our goal. We have come so far together and paid so much in blood and treasure, but the final destination is now clearly visible. Failure is not an option, so I ask for your full support of General McChrystal's assessment and let us continue our struggle with more courage, determination and resources. I truly believe, as General McChrystal does, that this war is winnable.

USNATO 00000444 003.2 OF 003

Sincerely Yours,

/s/

General Abdul Rahim Wardak  
Minister of National Defense

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